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Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
----------115750 200800Z /14
O 200533Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5871

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 7006

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS), KS, KN, US, CH, PPDC
SUBJ: RESPONSE TO ROKG QUESTIONS RE SECRETARY'S DISCUSSIONS IN PEKING

REF: STATE 197395

SUMMARY. MY DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER THIS MORNING DID NOT CHANGE ROKG VIEW OF THREE POWER CONFERENCE. IF ANYTHING THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS EVEN MORE NEGATIVE TODAY THAN HE WAS YESTERDAY. END SUMMARY.

1. I SAW FOREIGN MINISTER AT HIS HOME AT 11:00 O'CLOCK

THIS MORNING. AFTER HAVING REVIEWED SECTION 1 OF REFERENCE CABLE, I REQUESTED THAT ROKG RE-EXAMINE ITS POSITION ON THE THREE POWER MEETING, EMPHASIZING THAT IT WAS NOT A NEW PROPOSAL AND THAT WE FELT IT DESIRABLE TO INDICATE SOME FLEXIBILITY TO THE CHINESE. WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT WE OBVIOUSLY PERCEIVED THE SITUATION IN DIFFERENT WAYS HE PUT GREAT STRESS ON THE NEED TO BE PATIENT AND TO NOT GIVE ANY INDICATION OF BEING IN A HURRY. HE SAID ROKG WOULD BE UNWILLING TO RECONSIDER ITS POSITION. HE EVEN INDICATED THAT ROKG MIGHT NOT PARTICIPATE IN A THREE POWER CONFERENCE.
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2. HE CONTINUED BY SAYING THAT FIRST OF ALL, WE SHOULD EXPLORE WHETHER PRC AND USSR ARE PREPARED TO ADOPT NEW ATTITUDES. THIS CHANGE OF HEART MUST BE CONFIRMED BEFORE NEW PROPOSALS ARE TABLED. OTHERWISE NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN AND WE WOULD LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT OUR SIDE IS ANXIOUS TO "DO SOMETHING" AND HE REPEATED THAT WE WOULD

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APPEAR TO BE LOSING PATIENCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THESE TWO POWERS INDICATED SOME WILLINGNESS TO RECONSIDER THEIR POSITION, THEN THERE WOULD BE TIME TO CONSIDER NEW FORMULAS. AT THIS MOMENT, ANY NEW PROPOSALS WOULD BE PREMATURE. ROKG IS ALSO OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE ELEVATION OF STATUS OF THE NORTH (IN EYES OF WORLD AND VIS-A-VIS ROK) SHOULD A THREE POWER CONFERENCE COME ABOUT. IN ITS VIEWS SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD GIVE THE NORTH PRESTIGE AND A VOICE WHICH IT NOW DOES NOT HAVE.

3. WHEN I PURSUED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER PRC AND USSR WOULD BOTH HAVE TO INDICATE THEIR READINESS TO CHANGE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE THE IDEAL SITUATION. HOWEVER IF ONLY PRC SEEMED TO BE WILLING TO PURSUE A MORE FORTHCOMING POSITION, THEN THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO REVIEW THE SITUATION AND CONSULT ON NEW PROPOSALS.

4. HE ONCE AGAIN EXPRESSED AS HIS PERSONAL VIEW THE COM-PARISON THAT WOULD BE MADE IN KOREA OF A THREE POWER CONFERENCE WITH THE UN PEACE TALKS IN PARIS. HE SAID THE PERCEPTION HERE IS THAT THOSE PEACE TALKS WERE BASICALLY TWO POWER CONFERENCE WITH SOUTH VIETNAM BEING ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF WE CONTINUE TO PRESS THE THREE POWER PROPOSAL, THIS MIGHT BE MISUNDER-STOOD IN KOREA AND COULD TURN OUT TO BE VERY DETRIMENTAL

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TO U.S./ROK RELATIONSHIPS.

5. ON THE POINTS IN SECTION ONE OF REFTEL, I REVIEWED OUR POSITION AS CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPH A. ON PARAGRAPH B, FOREIGN MINISTER APPRECIATED OUR POSITION, BUT SUGGESTED THAT THE THREE POWER CONFERENCE WAS ONLY DESIGNED TO FORESTALL NORTH KOREAN PRESSURE FOR BILATERAL TALKS. I CHALLENGED HIS VIEWS BOTH IN TERMS OF TIMING AND BASIS FOR OUR PROPOSAL. REGARDING PARA-GRAPH C, I READ HIM THE APPROPRIATE PORTION OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO TITO AND PROMISED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS WISHES, TO LEAVE A COPY OF THAT PORTION WITH AMERICAN BUREAU DIRECTOR PARK. AS FOR PARAGRAPH D, FOREIGN MINISTER STRONGLY URGED THAT, AT LEAST, A MEMBER OF SECRETARY'S PARTY COME TO SEOUL AFTER THE PEKING VISIT. BRIEFINGS THROUGH NORMAL DIPLOMTTIC CHANNELS WOULD NOT BE ADEQUATE. HE POINTED OUT THAT AFTER SECRETARY KISSINGER'S TRIP, THEN ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB CAME TO SEOUL TO BRIEF ROKG. HE FELT THAT UNLESS UNHAPPY COMPARISONS WERE TO BE MADE, AT LEAST A COMPARABLE PROCESS SHOULD TAKE PLACE THIS TIME.

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6. COMMENT: FROM MY CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE LAST FEW DAYS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THERE IS NOT ONLY FIRM OPPOSITION TO THREE POWER CONFERENCE PROPOSAL BUT ALSO CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM ABOUT PRC'S WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL. FURTHERMORE, I THINK THAT THE ROKG IS SATISFIED WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION. IT HAS BEEN EMBOLDENED IN ITS OPTIMISTIC VIEW BY THE SUPPORT IT HAD RECEIVED FROM THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED, BY NORTH KOREA'S UN STRATEGY, AND BY THE ALLEGED INCREASING REQUESTS FROM NON-ALLIGNED COUNTRIES FOR CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THEREFORE THE PRESENT GAME PLAN IN ROKG'S VIEW SEEMS TO BE WORKING VERY NICELY AND THE ONLY THING THAT THEY ARE CONSIDERING ARE ACTIONS WHICH WOULD TEND TO STIMULATE FURTHER SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE, PARTICULARLY IN THE UN FORUM. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SEEMS TO BE SO PLEASED WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION THAT HE EVEN WENT SO FAR AS SAYING THAT IN HIS (REPEAT HIS) OWN VIEW, ROKG SHOULD NOT REQUEST MEMBERSHIP IN THE UN BUT SHOULD WAIT UNTIL IT'S INVITED TO JOIN.

7 RECOMMENDATION: FROM OUR NARROW VANTAGE POINT, I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT THE THREE-POWER PROPOSAL NOT BE PURSUED IN VIEW OF ROKG'S FIRM OPPOSITION (THERE MAY BE OTHER WAYS OF INDICATING FLEXIBILITY TO PRC WITHOUT

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PROPOSING ANY SPECIFIC APPROACH). MY RECOMMENDATION
IS BASED ON TWO CONCLUSIONS: (A) IN LIGHT OF THE FIRM
ROKG OPPOSITION, THE OPTIONS OF EITHER NEGLECTING THAT
OPPOSITION OR PURSUING FURTHER EFFORTS TO CHANGE ITS
MIND SEEM TO BE UNDESIRABLE. SECONDLY, HOWEVER, AND
PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLYUN WE NEED TO FIND SOME WAYS
OF EXPANDING ROKG'S HORIZONS. THIS IS THE MAIN REASON
WHY I HAVE CONTINUED TO EMPHASIZE TO BOTH FOREIGN
MINISTER AND SECRETARY GENERAL THE DESIRABILITY OF ROKG
COMING UP WITH SOME NEW PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO A
PERMANENT AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE PENINSULA ISSUE.
IN THE LONGER RUN, I THINK WE CAN CONVINCE ROKG TO BE
MORE FORTHCOMING WITH NEW IDEAS IF WE NOT FORCE IT TO
ACCEPT THOSE PROPOSALS OF OURS WHICH ARE SUCH ANATHEMA TO
THEM.
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